

Audix SCX-25

The latest mic offering from Audix scores well when it comes to giving consistent, balanced sound to most sources. And, as JON THORNTON discovers, its small footprint and good looks add to its appeal.

THE SCX-25 IS a fixed cardioid pattern, large diaphragm studio capacitor microphone. That literal description doesn't exactly make it stand out from the crowd. Visually, though, the SCX-25 is very distinctive. Looking rather like a high-tech lollipop, the 25mm diaphragm sits in its housing atop a slender tube housing the electronics. The overall height of this assembly is only a shade under 15cm, and the maximum width just over 5cm. What the picture doesn't really show very well is that it is also very slim — that diaphragm assembly is only just over 2cm deep — in fact Audix claims that this microphone (UK£507 + VAT) has the smallest footprint of any large diaphragm capacitor microphone to date.

Such a small package is obviously advantageous in terms of discreet miking on stage, or in fitting into tight positions in the studio, but this advantage would be wiped out should a bulky shockmount assembly be needed. Hence the other distinctive aspect of this microphone: a unique internal shockmounting arrangement whereby the capsule is completely isolated from the microphone body within a machined brass ring. You can see some evidence of this by squinting down the side of the diaphragm assembly, where some unusually large openings reveal the capsule and shockmount assembly. Sounds great in theory — but does it work?

This calls for another pseudo-scientific test. So, the Audix microphone is set up using its (supplied) solid clip alongside a U87 in its shockmount. With enough gain applied to each microphone to give equal level for a given sound source, kicking the feet of the microphone stands showed that the SCX-25 did as good a job in suppression of the thump as the conventional shockmount on the U87. Seems to work then.

With all of that internal trickery, and despite its appearance, the SCX-25 is surprisingly sparse externally, with no pad or filter options. In fact, it's so minimalist that it's easy to set up the wrong way round, not helped by the fact that the metal grille is so dense that you can't see the diaphragm very well. Audix claims a frequency response of 20Hz — 20kHz, although the response curves published in the two-sided sheet that passes for a manual would seem to suggest that this rolls off at the

high and low ends quite early.

The first sonic test was the usual male vocal. Here the SCX-25 performed well, lending a slight presence to the sound around the 10kHz area, but succeeding in making this sound very gentle, and not at all forced. Low frequency extension seemed less impressive than the C414 used in comparison, and this was confirmed when setting up a spaced pair of SCX-25s as drum overheads. Here again the overall sound was pleasantly neutral, with a touch of warmth to the high end, but a progressive roll-off at the upper reaches of its response that helped to soften some overly splashy cymbals.

Audix also claims that the microphone is not prone to proximity effect — and here I'd disagree somewhat. There is a slight shift in tonality around the bass end when used very close to a sound source, but it is nowhere near as noticeable as with some other microphones. I'd probably put this down to the fact the LF extension seems to have been rolled off much earlier, so the proximity bump has less relative input to the overall response, but it does preclude its use to get those Jim Reeves style vocals. But this can work to its advantage — certainly when working with an acoustic guitar I was able to position the microphone much closer than I ordinarily would — resulting in a sound that was very solid in the low-mids, but without sounding boomy or overblown.

The accompanying literature really sells the SCX-25 as an instrumental microphone, particularly for pianos, and in this application you can see why. In situations where bleed needs to be limited, being able to position the microphone inside the piano with the lid closed or partially closed helps. The trade-off here is that usually you are left with a slightly closed-in sound, with little in the way of air or space around it.

In this application, the unique attributes of the SCX-25 suddenly make a lot of sense. The built in shock suppressions, reduced proximity effect, and an off-axis response that, while coloured to some degree is fairly smooth, all result in some great sounding results. In fact, Audix produces an optional mic clip — the D-flex — which can be clipped

onto the dividing bars on a grand piano and allow precise and close placement of the microphones while allowing the lid to be completely closed if necessary. Although not having either of these clips or a grand piano at my disposal, a pair of SCX-25s was put to use in an 'as-live' recording in a large hall, positioned just inside the lid of an upright piano. The size, and particularly the height, of this hall means that recording reasonably loud pop ensembles needs bleed to be addressed on some microphones, and in this case I was able to use a heavy piano cover draped over the top of the upright. The results were impressive: a detailed but almost creamy piano sound, with no hint of honkiness to it in the low-mids.

Overall, the SCX-25 is probably best summed up as a very forgiving microphone. It doesn't stamp its personality all over a sound, but instead gives a consistent, balanced but still detailed sound to most sources. The absolute limits of both its high and low frequency response might make it unsuitable for some applications, but its size and unique shape together with its sound will undoubtedly win it a lot of friends. ■



PROS

Compact size; internal shockmount; understated but detailed sound; lack of exaggerated proximity effect.

CONS

No HPF or pad; absolute LF extension may not be low enough for some applications.



EXTRAS

The Audix F-90 is a miniature prepolarised condenser mic that is very low profile and designed primarily for drums and percussion. With a cardioid pattern, it has an machined aluminum capsule, integrated mic cable, and a chrome-plated steel clamping system with a flexible gooseneck. Operation requires Phantom power of 9-52V and a phantom power adapter is included.

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